

Civil Affairs team treats Djiboutian livestock near Ali Sabieh during civic action program

Photos and Story by Lance Cpl. Adam C. Schnell

NEAR ALI SABIEH, Djibouti – Small goats and sheep speckled the mountainsides in a quiet community here as members of the 412th Civil Affairs Battalion treated more than 500 of them during a Veterinarian Civic Action Program Jan. 27.

The battalion, which is in the region supporting Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, participated in their first VETCAP since arriving in Djibouti a couple weeks ago.

“It was great for the team to get out and work together,” said Army 1st Lt. Amy K. Peterson-Colwell, staff veterinarian for the battalion.

As a veterinarian in her civilian life, she found that her experiences helped in administering the needed medicine to help the sick animals. The same experiences also are used to teach villagers how to improve the health of their herds.

“The animals here are their life, without the animals they wouldn’t survive,” said Peterson-Colwell.

With many animals in their herds needing medicine to stay alive, most families travel miles by foot to take advantage of the VETCAP. For one family, they herded their goats and sheep over six miles of mountainous landscape starting near the Ethiopian border.

“It’s about a hour and a half walk for us,” said

Abdi Iltireh, a local herder.

Although a long walk, this is the second time Iltireh brought his herds to a VETCAP. With the help of the International Development and Relief Board, a non-governmental agency, members of CJTF-HOA participated in a similar exercise in the area in June.

“We’ve worked with the people in this area a lot,” said Alan Funk, a member of IDRB.

With building relationships a major goal within the Horn of Africa, VETCAPs like this one helps to provide mission accomplishment. The medicine works very well with the animals and many families come back whenever they hear the American military is performing a VETCAP in their area, said Iltireh.

“Sometimes I hear that Americans are bad people, but that’s not true, they are good people,” he commented. “We’re all from Adam and Eve, we’re all the same.”

The battalion, now with the experience with one VETCAP, are heading north to Tadjoura to hopefully treat thousands of goats, camels, sheep and donkeys during a two-day VETCAP.

“Besides treating our animals, we are really getting to know each other,” commented Iltireh. “We are becoming brothers.”



Army 1st Lt. Amy K. Peterson-Colwell, staff veterinarian for the 412th Civil Affairs Battalion, holds a sheep given as a gift by a herder during a Veterinarian Civic Action Program here Jan. 24. Peterson-Colwell, a veterinarian in her civilian life, uses those skills to better treat the goats and sheep herded to the VETCAP.



Army Master Sgt. Robert L. Young, medical operations noncommissioned officer for 412th Civil Affairs Battalion, helps to corral a herd of goats and sheep during a Veterinarian Civic Action Program here Jan. 24. This is the first VETCAP the team participated in since arriving in support of Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa.